

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT MAGNAN, DIRECTOR
OF THE FORT PECK TRIBES FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
TO
MONTANA LEGISLATURE'S
FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee my name is Robert Magnan and I'm an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes. I'm also the Director of the Fort Peck Tribes Fish and Wildlife Department. I'm here today to speak against Senate Bill 143 which is to Revise Bison Management.

This proposed bill does nothing for the management of bison but to kill them off whenever they enter the State of Montana's public or private lands. The bill states that management of Wild Buffalo is for disease control. I know this is not totally true because the dangerous disease the sponsor is referring to is Brucellosis. If this foreign animal disease is that dangerous then why doesn't the Montana Department Livestock, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks or the Montana Department of Environmental Quality attempt to eliminate all wildlife that comes from a herd that could be infected with Brucellosis and enters the state of Montana. Elk that come from the greater Yellowstone area also have been known to transmit this disease and they are the only true FREE ROAMING species that could infect the states livestock industry, neighboring states or possibly Canada.

I have been a Montana State Hunter Education Instructor for the last Twenty Two (22) years during those 22 years I have been teaching my students about wildlife management and the importance it plays for hunters and non-hunters alike to have respect for all wildlife including wild bison. This bill goes against all teaching of hunters education Course such as hunter responsibility. A hunter cares for wildlife and demonstrates this by respecting hunting seasons. This bill establishes a year -round hunting season and gives this magnificent creature no time to raise their young in peace. It violates the ethics and standards Montana has set in regards to wildlife management. The course teaches students about conservation, which is the responsible care and management of wildlife . Senate bill 143 goes against this and if this bill becomes law then we might as well put the Yellowstone Buffalo on the endangered species list because the state will be killing them all off.

The Tribes in the State of Montana have been fighting anti bison bills for several years. In the last three legislative sessions alone the Fort Peck Tribes have asked the sponsors of these anti-bison bills to work with the Tribes in drafting a legislation that could work for all citizens of Montana, which includes the Indian Tribes of the State. In my past testimonies with the Senate and House Committees, I have reminded them that State law recognizes that there is a unique Government to Government relationship between the State Government and Tribal Governments. Not one sponsor of these anti- bison bills has ever made an attempt ask Tribes their views on these proposed bills. A majority of these bills are from legislators that reside in district that have reservations in or next to them. A simple phone call would be a good start.

In the last year alone the State of Montana and the Tribes have made very important steps in proving that reintroduction of Brusellosis-Free Yellowstone Buffalo onto Public and Tribal lands can work. This bill will eliminate the ability of the State of Montana to transplant bison on public or Tribal lands completely and wipes out the bi-partisan work accomplished by SB - 212 in the 2011 Legislative Session. The rest of nation will again look at Montana as an anti- wildlife state. Thank You for your time and consideration in this matter.